

Gender Inequality at Workplace: Finding Reasons and Defining Solutions

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Abstract

There are many challenges facing both men and women, but the most significant one is the inequality between their statuses in the workplace, whether it is obtaining a job, achieving promotions, or following policies that favor one sex over the other. A special study on gender inequality was needed, completely different from previous research. This paper, as a reference study, examines gender inequality in its concept as well as its various dimensions and how researchers view it. This study can be beneficial by adding new ideas to the subject matter and proposing different solutions to the problem. It aims to answer the following question: what are the factors causing gender inequality at workplace and what solutions are proposed? An analysis of the subject from a critical perspective with a new way of seeing it from several dimensions and a way of discovering the research gap that existed within previous studies.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, Leadership, Workplace, & Women.

1. Introduction

As a result of global policies aimed at reducing gender inequality, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) have emerged, which are focused on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The reforms and actions that give women equal access to financial and natural resources (Esquivel & Sweetman, 2016) contribute to improving the well-being of women and the nutrition of their children (Duflo, 2012). This goal is seen as a strategy to increase food security (Agarwal & Herring, 2013), reduce poverty (Jayachandran, 2015), and ensure sustainable development (Tiwari & Shingh, 2020). Nonetheless, most of our understanding of spatial distribution and the magnitude of gender inequality is derived from national statistics or from limited case studies, and the gender gap in terms of wages for full-time employees in the workplace still exists.

Some people believe that gender inequality has decreased over the past few years, while others believe that it has even ended (Lewis, 2006). There is a growing problem of hidden discrimination between the sexes that has not been clearly defined, which has contributed greatly to the lack of attention given to this issue by institutional departments, thus remaining unaddressed. As a result, women are underrepresented in managerial positions as well as in wages (Williams et al., 2012). However, masculinity discourse has become common in workplaces and has been considered to be successful. However, it remains invisible (Bruni et al., 2004). Orientation programs may help to uncover the reasons behind gender differences (Fagenson-Elandet al., 1997). Through their organizational structure and functions, international organizations are generally considered to be neutral regarding sex and not affected by gender, but much research and literary evidence otherwise suggests, accusing them being masculine in reality (Williams et al., 2012).

The question that the research asks as a consequence is " what is the significance of gender equality and what benefits does it bring to the workplace?" Considering how commonplace vulgar ideas are about justice, However,

the topic of International Women's Day is complex and controversial. It's common that many workplace cultures lack a clear understanding of the nature and importance of gender differences in the workplace, disregard the full scope of reasons for seeking greater diversity, and have simplistic expectations of the potential benefits of diversity.

In spite of the fact that, globally, gender ratios in the workplace remain largely unequal both horizontally (across industries and sectors) and vertically (across leadership positions) (Sojo et al., 2016) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Initiatives to promote gender diversity can be controversial, raising concerns about eroding merit and leading to unfair treatment of the dominant gender (male or female) (Dover et al., 2020). There is, furthermore, the argument that there is a natural limit to sexual diversity in the workplace, given what is often viewed as an inherent difference between the types of occupations that are appropriate for women and the types that are appropriate for men, based upon alleged average differences in their potential for employment. A concern has also been raised regarding the presentation of the issue of gender differences. Sometimes this is the result of misconceptions about women's mental, emotional, and behavioral characteristics that differ fundamentally from those of men.

In view of this, we have divided our review into four sections. The first section discusses gender differences and their relation to professional behavior, followed by a discussion of the causes of gender inequality in the second one. Recommendations for some solutions to this problem are made in the third section. Finally, the last section presents a discussion of the benefits that organizations can reap from achieving gender equality.

2. Methodology

The study was mainly based on previous research that had been conducted on the issue of gender inequality at work before. Figure (1) shows, the steps that have been followed by a methodology to reach the main research objective are as follows:

- The first step is to study the main concepts of gender inequality and its major sources.
- The second step is to determine the causes of gender inequality in the workplace.
- The third step is to find different ways to solve the problem of gender inequality.
- The fourth step is to discuss the benefits of gender equality in the workplace.

3. Conceptualizations of gender inequality in workplace

3.1. Definition of Gender Inequality

It's been argued by Forsberg & Olsson (2022) that the gender inequality concept is a complex one, as researchers have different definitions of it and that gender inequality is caused by unequal distribution of non-material and material resources. This concept is also related to the concept of human and social capital, which was originally defined by the ability to obtain a job or an education. According to Unterhalter (2015), a definition of inequality is not a theoretical or abstract issue, as it involves understanding the institutional foundations that result from political or economic processes. Thus, understanding the reasons for gender discrimination in terms of opportunities and the achievement of valuable results is imperative for understanding the reasons for it. According to Serena, inequality is primarily the result of inequality of income within the same family. This is because of the differences in skill levels between men and women, as well as the fact that women are unable to obtain a greater income because they spend much more time raising their children (Day, 2022). This article has pointed out that gender inequality is defined as when there are no equal opportunities provided for men and women in terms of rights and opportunities in every field, including education, economics, and health.

3.2. Performance of Gender Inequality in the Workplace

Tovmasyan and Minasyan (2019) stressed that the gender inequality is due to the policies implemented by human resource managers in the fields of recruiting, bias in promotion, performance evaluations, training, and termination of employment, as they confirmed that female employees were discriminated against personally.

It is possible to distinguish between the "explainable" and the "unexplainable" aspects of the gender gap. The explainable part would be when companies try to take advantage of the skills of their employees regardless of their gender (which may have a negative impact on their promotion chances). In other cases, even if the characteristics

relating to human capital, such as age, education background, work experience, etc., are equal among men and women, it is still not possible to explain the majority of the gap between men and women: In a previous study by Iida, (2018) the difference in human capital characteristics can only explain 21% of the reasons for gender inequality in the ratio of managers, but only 30% of the gender inequality in management ratio scan be explained by the number of hours worked and cultural differences among men, both of which are difficult to resolve.

As opposed to that, the ideal worker tends to be male, even though this is not always the case (Billing, 2011); one who is able and willing to give priority to work over anything else. Normally, women are not associated with the characteristics of successful employees (Heilman, 2001),since the gender perception of a successful male is deeply ingrained (Stanley,2007).

Usually, men are easier to embody the personalities of successful employees than women, but women can actually do the same as men in the workplace, where many women believe that in order to achieve their goals and advance in the field, they must embody this role. As opposed to taking a compassionate look at them, they try to appear solid and able to handle anything (Gherardi & Poggio, 2001; Irvine & Vermilya, 2010). However, the incompatibility between their sexual status as women and their ability to succeed and excel as men is often perceived as a failure and a sign they are less successful compared to men. This has contributed to along period of suffering for women in business, who have been described as "feisty" (Weyer, 2007). A second perspective observes that women can successfully take on the roles of men at work, which is evaluated according to different jobs where female communication skills are highly valued in service (Kerfoot & Korczynski, 2005).

As Kelan (2008) argues, this may not necessarily mean, however ,that women will benefit from it, since men may be highly appreciated for their performance of femininity at work, while women's similar performance may be rejected simply because it is an expression of femininity that is "natural." As a result of this, men and women can "do" both femininity and masculinity jobs simultaneously. Having a different value placed on these gender offerings can contribute to gender inequality.

According to Liu et al. (2015), most discourses about success in business contexts take on a masculine tone. It's a struggle for people to argue that sex has nothing to do with performance, and isn't even related to it (Kelan, 2009).

There is a general recognition among both men and women that their workplaces are gender- equal even when they actively marginalize women, and that organizational practices and policies are viewed as benign and gender-neutral by them (Wood & Newton, 2006). In this situation, Kelan(2009) refers to the phenomenon known as "gender burn out," where workers acknowledge that gender discrimination exists, but insist that their workplaces, managers, and policies are neutral and that there is no gender bias (Lewis, 2006). However, if a job failure does occur, the gender gap cannot be denied, but is termed as a 'single incident' that cannot be generalized (Kelan, 2009).

In the following table, we can see examples of gender discrimination from a wide range of workplaces along with the research that has been conducted within those workplaces. As can be seen from this table, gender discrimination is not confined to one image but can vary in the way and style based on the workplace policies and practices applied to the sexes.

Table No:01

Gender inequality studies in different places and it's important findings

**Case study In the
Labor Market**

In an aquatic agricultural

In educational place

In manufacturing firm

In trade place

**In institutes of
higher
learning in
science and
technology**

Findings

According to the results, men showed reservations with their answers, and women's roles in general have been linked to mothers and homes, as well as stereotypes of their image at work, especially in the market for healthy environments.

As far as the level of primary education is concerned, women were not given the same status they received in regard to education as men, and it was concluded that this had a significant impact on Pakistan's economic growth in a manner that might be of concern to policymakers in the future.

There have been many factors at play in the creation of gender inequality, such as emancipation, public policy, and income, and there have been no signs of equality in the labor market.

In terms of work and results, there was a difference between men and women, whether in terms of income or the number and size of names caught, due to

the nature and physiology of women and their inability to perform forceful work, such as catching big names.

A large wage gap exists between men and women, with a correlation between working hours and the likelihood of promotion for women, unlike for men, and motherhood has been found to significantly affect income, which drops by 20-30% after motherhood.

Educational institutes that conduct research on women suffer from gender inequality, where women have low positions in the organizational hierarchy, are excluded from important management positions, and are isolated from the workplace.

Author

(Suzano et al., 2023)

(Chaudhry, 2007)

(Ahmed & Hyder, 2006)

(Cole et al., 2015)

(Kato et al., 2013)

(Gupta & Sharma, 2003)

4. Findings

As one of the most difficult problems to resolve, gender inequality has been a thorny issue for which no clear answer can be provided. In order to determine the underlying causes, four main reasons were examined from the perspective of the researcher related to physical differences and environmental factors affecting the issue mainly as follows.

4.1. Unfair policies in the work place

Many of countries worldwide have enacted legislation addressing gender-based discrimination in the workplace in an effort to eliminate the disadvantages women face in the realm of policy and decision- making. The term "discrimination" in legal terms refers to either direct or indirect discrimination, and the most important thing to understand is that in its legal sense, the term "discrimination" does not suggest any intentional intent. Discrimination that is direct involves being treated in a particular way because of your gender (for instance, reluctance to hire mothers or women of childbearing age may be considered direct discrimination), while test, policy, or practice that has an undue impact on a woman or man is considered as indirect discrimination. For instance, women, who give birth physically and are more likely to take (or be entitled to) maternity leave, are affected negatively by jobs, promotions, and training that require continuous service or full-time employment.

4.2. Professional attitudes towards women

Hostility, unwanted sexual interest, and sexual coercion are three types of sexual discrimination that occur in the workplace. How does each of these forms happen and why do they exist? There are multiple theoretical frameworks for understanding when and why sexism occurs, including social identity theories, inappropriateness models, role contrast theories, and the racial hypothesis. As defined by social identity theory, we classify others by salient or observable characteristics, and gender is a salient or observable characteristic that automatically leads to gender stereotyping. According to these stereotypes, women possess "efficacy" (qualities such as leadership, autonomy, and reason), which are often associated with men. Incompatibility theory and role-contrast theory hold that stereotypes about women are perceived to be incompatible with traits that men are regarded as essential to success in traditional masculine roles—so type activation can negatively affect women's perception of fitting in. As working mothers are perceived as less competent and committed than their male colleagues, their maternity status exacerbates gender bias. Leaders are more likely to be white when all is well. Gender stereotypes are affected by race intersections, as indicated by the findings above. Despite that, the study of racial stereotypes and gender stereotypes has traditionally been undertaken separately.

4.3. Social Standards

The societal norms that apply to women in the workplace are higher than those applied to men. A woman who succeeds in a field traditionally dominated by men will not like to be viewed negatively for it. Similarly, men are criticized for their female-oriented behaviors, such as their choice of career ,modesty and a demand for flexibility. Gender-based harassment can mostly be explained by the fact that it represents a form of social status protection in which males are usually given higher social status than females. Thus, people are motivated to "defend their own position by degrading the position of others based on gender". It is also important to note that both women and men who challenge gender discrimination through gender nonconformity are at risk of retaliation, a problem that can manifest in the form of workplace harassment and rudeness in the workplace. As well as causing withdrawal from work and employment, both forms of sexual harassment negatively affect women's well-being.

4.4. Psychological differences between gender

In the workplace, gender differences are often the result of differences in psychological characteristics, but these differences are usually very subtle and hard to distinguish from each other and usually have little to do with professional performance. This is a positive social behavior when it comes to workplace gatherings, but it can also affect the group dynamics.

5. Problem-solving(solution)strategies

A number of research-backed strategies exist in which sexism can be eliminated in a number of different ways, as shown in Table 2. According to research, sexism can be both deliberate and decision-making in nature, and so it can

result in decisions that harm the work, and as a consequence, harm the organization as a whole.

Table No: 02

Solutions to solve gender inequality problem

	knowledge, and career advancement opportunities.
Blind decision-making	In order to avoid relying on gender when making decisions, we can use (Chang blind decision-making. It is common for individuals to make decisions & Milkman, based on stereotypes. It's tough to evaluate someone's CV when we don't 2020) know their gender.
Substituting names	When looking at a resume, you can use this technique by substituting names for gender. It can be beneficial to ask yourself whether you'd make the same choice if you were choosing between a male candidate and female candidate. It has led to more self-nominations by women as a result of the development of a new social norm that has allowed women to push back against their stereotypes.
Articulating new social norms	By evaluating the candidates for any job position simultaneously with the same criteria to avoid any bias that could interfere in the selection of the most suitable candidate for any job position that is available for a job opening.
Evaluating candidates jointly	Making more informed decisions when it comes to decisions involving an individual is facilitated by learning more about him or her. The individualization of information acts as a buffer against stereotyping. When we have access to specific information about a person, we are less likely to rely on stereotypes to fill in the gaps in our knowledge.
Individuating	Education about the potential negative effects of gender bias on women and organizations is one method of reducing gender bias. People can take action to correct their own biases and those of others once they become aware of these issues.
Educating	There have been a lot of recent attempts by the cultural community to focus on women's self-improvement or empowerment through work as a new solution for the problem of women unemployment. As well, women's empowerment emphasizes future actions instead of past ones, keeping the message optimistic. Due to the increase in women's rights, these women are more likely to hold higher- ranking positions at the workplace and are more (Zhu, 2021) willing to pursue these positions as they grow in their careers. When women are empowered, their status as individuals and as citizens improves, as well as their political participation. Involvement. Having their voices heard in core positions
Empower women	

	Within politics, such as that of the government and its institutions, allows women to participate more actively.	
Raise women's awareness of human dignity	In order to compete with men in the workplace, women must develop a sense of self-awareness of human dignity. By amending laws and making women aware of the most serious people in their lives, society can influence women's self-awareness. As a result, the law can be amended to provide women with information about society's support. In the workplace, it provides women with the confidence and courage to make decisions based on their own values. Women's inferiority can be fundamentally transformed through this program.	

6. Benefits of gender equality in the workplace

It is beneficial to the economy for women to be treated equally at work, since economically healthy workplace is one where there is gender equality. In addition, women's participation in the work force leads to an increase in both wages and the GDP of the country. Workplace equality is more than just a moral imperative; it's a business matter. To further prove how valuable women are to companies, here are five benefits:

6.1. Team performance

An organization or team with a diverse workforce or demographic can gain more experience, knowledge, skills, and values. Decisions may be improved by expecting women to bring different skills or approaches. It has been suggested by Ali et al., (2011) that having women in leadership positions may serve both an internal and an external signaling function for stakeholders as it signals an outcome of the appointment or presence.

6.2. Attract a large talent pool

Diversity is a key ingredient in attracting and retaining employees. There will be a significant shift in the demographics of the workforce with the arrival of new generations, and it is more important than ever that your company adjust itself to meet the needs of this generation in order to survive and thrive. To be successful, it's imperative for your business to develop and maintain a diverse and equal workplace from day one. This will allow you to attract a highly qualified workforce that will fill your company with employees with a wide range of diverse experience and knowledge (Mousa et al., 2020).

6.3. Improve employee retention

In today's economy, it is extremely important for companies to have diverse leadership in order to encourage women to remain and give them a chance to pursue a career path in leadership.

6.4. Change work place culture for the better

The retention of talent is a key function of a business to ensure its survival and success in a candidate-driven market. It is detrimental to culture to have disproportionate leaders. In order to create a positive cultural environment that fosters diversity in hiring and a work culture free of misinformed, harmful behavior, it's crucial to have a diverse leadership team.

Women and men benefit from adopting flexible work cultures that encourage moms to join or rejoin the workforce. Creating a meaningful work experience for employees is the new standard and flexibility plays a big role in the success of that goal. In fact, employees who are flexible have higher levels of engagement and have become more sought-after by employers.

6.5. Increase job satisfaction

Turnover increases with absenteeism and unhappy employees. A person's performance doesn't just affect them, but also their colleagues. The company as a whole is affected as well. For instance, the absence of an employee will result in someone else having to complete that employee's work, which can increase the employee's stress level and, in many cases, cause them to decide to leave the company.

There is also a direct correlation between higher levels of job satisfaction and gender diversity in the workforce, and both women and men will experience higher rates of job satisfaction when these factors are present.

Conclusions

As a topic of thorny and ambiguous importance, gender inequality is difficult to deal with due to differing perspectives and misconceptions regarding its nature and importance, as well as neglect of and solutions for these differences, and some times simplified expectations of potential

benefits. Reviewing the literature on gender inequality at work and its relationship to professional behavior and outcomes, this study looks at evidence that supports the claim. It was concluded from the study that the genders are not clearly different, and they are not so similar as to be interchangeable. The equity-based benefits of gender diversity in the workplace include the fact that it may lead to less discrimination based on gender in the workplace. Following that, we examine an organization's potential benefits from gender diversity. It is recommended that policymakers establish equity initiatives in order to enhance employee productivity in the workplace.

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